

**“The One and the Many”**  
**A Mystical Reading of *Of Human Bondage***

**Kamal K Roy**  
**Retired Professor of English**  
**University of North Bengal**

**Abstract**

The thesis maintained in this paper is that *Of Human Bondage* is essentially a mystical novel. It is not at all surprising that with his rich fund of mystical experience and his wide reading in mystical literature Maugham should turn his monumental autobiographical novel into a mystical one. Since he normally privileges the philosophy of events over the philosophy of ideas, his philosophical preoccupations very often go unnoticed. Anyway he systematically works out his mystical vision in the present novel. The ease with which the boy Philip exits from the plane of material reality of perception to the plane of spiritual reality of memory and imagination denotes continuity between them. Then the role-players such as Philip and Mildred, Miss Wilkinson and Athenly dissolve all antinomy between appearance and reality, self and other, one and many. Time and space change one into many; imagination simply reverses the process. Philip becomes in imagination one with the ancient Greeks; Athenly with the Spaniards of the Golden Age. What, however, confirms the oneness of man is the collective unconscious as his common destiny and death as his common end. This belief in the oneness of man and of the world is the nuclear core of mysticism.

**Keywords :** The empirical ego, The collective unconscious, The transcendental or universal self, Naturalism, Aestheticism, Mysticism.

I was always conscious of many elements showing the directly opposite tendency. I felt them positively swarming inside me, these elements. — Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*

All the world's a stage,

And all the men and women merely players: — *Shakespeare, As You Like It* Droll thing life is — that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose. — Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

In mystical experience the dilemma of duality is resolved. For the mystic is given the unifying vision of the One in the All, and the All in the One. — F.C. Happold, *Mysticism*

*Of Human Bondage* (1915) has elicited from its critics so polarized a response that for each comment its exact opposite can be cited. Even Maugham's obviously innocuous claim that "*Of Human Bondage* is not an autobiography, but an autobiographical novel" (*Of Human Bondage*, viii) has been controverted. Cordell, to begin with, perceives "the strong autobiographical nature in all except the closing section of the book (71). Conversely Ross thinks that to regard the novel "as fictionalized autobiography is to make it appear a much more immediate and direct reflection of experience than it is (92). This pattern of assertion and negation can be further traced. Kochar, for example, is quite emphatic that "Philip Carey is Maugham himself" (95). No less emphatic is the denial. "Philip in *Of Human Bondage* may have shared many of Maugham's experiences", concedes Alec Waugh, "but he is not Maugham" (43).

Naturally the controversy about the Maugham-Philip relations spills over to the life-art relations. McIver asserts that Maugham considers "life...more important than art" (15); Muller that Maugham cares for "life for art's sake" (242). Philip's aestheticization of life, maintains Howe, dissolves this life-art dichotomy: "Philip Carey...has something like the Goethian ideal of life as an artistic medium to be shaped creatively into an individual and satisfying pattern"(287). Himself a Goethe aficionado, Maugham throws enough hints to suggest *Wilhelm Meister* as his model for *Of Human Bondage*. For a number of reasons, he considers Goethe's novel "a very interesting and significant work": "It is the last of the eighteenth-century novels of sentiment, it is the first of the romantic novels of the nineteenth century, and it is the forerunner of the autobiographical novels of which there has been in our own day such a plentiful crop" (*Books and You*, 52-53). Elsewhere he categorizes *Wilhelm Meister* as a *Bildungsroman*, which he defines as

the novel that is concerned with a young man's apprenticeship to life. ... It gives the author an opportunity to air his views on various problems that confront man in the confusion and haphazards of life, and if, forgetting that philosophy had better be left to philosophers, who can deal with it better, he wishes to philosophise, he can do that too. (*Points of View*, 41)

Convinced that a philosopher's philosophy is rooted in his life, Philip intends to devise a personal ethic of his own. This enterprise requires him to find out "man's relation to the world he lives in, man's relation with the men among whom he lives, and finally man's relation to himself" (*OHB*, 394). Philip is actually repeating here a similar programme of Schopenhauer, sequenced in reverse: "Our Relation to Ourselves: Our Relation to Others: Worldly Fortune" ("Counsels and Maxims", 3). Philip's explorations of the three interrelated entities of self, society and the world are the raw material for his biography. As a matter of fact, Buckley has hailed *Wilhelm Meister* as "the prototype" of the *Bildungsroman*, *Of Human Bondage* as "a standard early-modern example" (*Season of Youth*, vii), and has studied it accordingly (248-255).

Maugham's obvious preoccupation with philosophy in *OHB* has led, for instance, Curtis and Hastings to take up diametrically opposite positions. Despite Philip's avowed philosophical project, Curtis holds that no intensive analysis of *OHB* will "make a 'strike' of the author's philosophy". He, however, concedes that "[i]f it has a philosophy it is one of events rather than ideas" (*The Pattern of Maugham*, 88). First, the narrator contradicts Curtis when he squarely blames received ideas for the youth's distorted perspective upon life: "They must discover for themselves that all they have read and all they have been told are lies, lies, lies; and each discovery is another nail driven into the body on the cross of life" (*OHB*, 178). Second, with Cronshaw as his inspiration, Philip frames his provisional ethic thus: "Follow your inclinations with due regard to the policeman round the corner" (*OHB*, 392). Of course he lives by it, and then realizes that his "rule of life, to follow one's instincts with due regard to the policeman round the corner had not acted very well there" (*OHB*, 642). Evidently Philip's philosophy is both of ideas and of events. In contrast to Curtis, Hastings seems to think the novel's concern with ideas a bit excessive. In any case, she does not approve of "improving lectures thrown in on religion, philosophy and art" (166). How a hero, engaged in the quest for an ideal value, who comes successively under the influence of the aesthete Hayward, the naturalist Cronshaw and the mystic Athelny, can altogether avoid delving into ideas. As his ideas emerge out of his lived experiences, they are not exactly excrescences. Even then a pertinent question is whether his ideas have been properly contextualized and concretized. Critical opinions are likely to differ on this issue. Burt, for example, commends Maugham's narrative objectivity:

*Of Human Bondage* presents events and characters largely without interpretation by the narrator. In fact, the reader is not urged to adopt any definite conclusions, events and characters are rarely interpreted. Rather, like the Persian rug, what meaning the reader ultimately finds in the novel he or she must put into it. The existential crisis that Philip inevitably faces is also faced by the reader. (78-79)

Primarily subjective in nature, the novel's dominant mood has evoked a mixed response. Naik is struck by the "negativeness of *Of Human Bondage*" (55), Curtis by its positiveness. He applauds Philip's "belief in the power of the human spirit to rise above conditions of the bleakest hopelessness" (*The Pattern of Maugham*, 87). Like its informing spirit, the novel's form too sharply divides its critics. So faulty is the book's construction, thinks Kingsley Amis, that "theme and coherence have departed by three-quarters of the way through" (24). Likewise Naik too damns the novel as "only a sprawling chronicle", which has its "redundancies and repetitions" (57). For all its immensity, counterclaims Calder, "there is little in *Of Human Bondage* which is not an integral part of the central theme" (*W. Somerset Maugham* 92). Critics are also at odds over the position of *OHB*, in the Maugham canon. "*Of Human Bondage*", affirms Kuner, "is not the beginning, but the end of Maugham's credo" ("The Development of W. Somerset Maugham", 178). Whereas Ward sees the novel as "an isolated attempt" (128), Brander sees it as reaching "back to Maugham's early novels" and "forward to *Cakes and Ale*" (27-28).

When it comes to ranking *Of Human Bondage* among either Maugham's or contemporary novels, critics predictably go to extremes. MacCarthy, to begin with, places it among those few novels which "will float on the stream of time when the mass of modern realistic fiction is sediment at the bottom" ("The English Maupassant", 15). Pfeiffer singles out *OHB* as the only novel "in which Maugham reached for the stars" (58). In Weidman's view, "*Of Human Bondage* is the Mt. Everest of Maugham's work. It is, at the same time, all the way up there with the few Himalaya peaks of the twentieth-century novel"(xii). Approbation reaches its crescendo when Carl and Mark van Doren hail *OHB* as "perhaps the most brilliant of the many autobiographical novels which the present century has seen" (227). The novel, however, does not lack its debunkers. For Spencer, *OHB* "merely fills out, in its moving, efficient, and vivid way, those

areas of awareness which we already possess"(82). Whitehead goes so far as to relegate *Of Human Bondage* from "Maugham's masterpiece" to "an impressive tombstone marking the end of the first phase of his writing career" (*Maugham : A Reappraisal* 78). Alpert sees in the critical controversy over *OHB* "one of the signs of the continuing vitality of W. Somerset Maugham and of his work"(21). Similarly Professor Erlin, a character in the novel, thinks that "one mark of a writer's greatness is that different minds can find in him different inspirations" (*OHB*, 143).

Now the focus shifts to a hitherto overlooked issue. There is a striking similarity between *Notes from Underground* and *Of Human Bondage* in respect of certain events, ideas and characters. At the risk of a slight exaggeration, it may be said that the naturalist Maugham's model is Maupassant, and the aesthete Maugham's Pater. But the mystic Maugham has as his inspiration the trio of Spinoza, Schopenhauer and Dostoevsky. Maugham reveals his intense Russophilia in his own person in *A Writer's Notebook* (pp. 113-148) where he picks out Dostoevsky as his affinity for his mystical life vision. He also uses his persona Ashenden, the British agent, to express his craze for Russian fiction. Ashenden comes to know "Anastasia Alexandrovna Leonidev" at the time when "Russian art seized upon Europe with the virulence of an epidemic of influenza". Ashenden and his Russian lover "talked together of Alyosha in the *Brothers Karamazov*, of Natasha in *War and Peace*, of Anna Karenina, and of *Fathers and Sons*"(*Collected Short Stories* 3, 205-206). Hastings identifies the time in question as 1911, when Maugham was working on *Of Human Bondage*, and the Russian lady as "Princess Alexandra Kropotkin", Maugham's lover of the moment. With her he used to "drink vodka and discuss Tolstoy and Dostoevsky with passionate intensity" (160). Phelps thinks that the Russian influence means

an increasing insistence on the superiority of the intuition and the imagination over the intellect, a revival of interest in mysticism and the supernatural, a reassertion of the individual as the centre of interest as opposed to the group or the class or the type, and a growing awareness of the fluidity of human personality. (159-160)

Maugham's own mystical experience, his exposure to "the Russian fever" and his discovery of Russian fiction come in quick succession. The resultant anti-materialist, anti-intellectualist stance

makes him reject wholesale the French and English novel tradition: “It was fiction fit for a middle-class civilization, well-fed, well-clothed, well-housed, and its readers were resolute to bear in mind that all they read was make-believe” (*WN*, 113-114). Of all Dostoevsky’s novels, *Notes from Underground* has a special personal appeal to Maugham. When the underground man portrays himself as a schoolboy, he also prefigures both Maugham and Philip as schoolboys:

I was an orphan, already browbeaten by them[his distant relatives on whom he was dependent], introspective, silently and ferociously shy. My schoolfellows greeted me with cruel and ill-natured sneers because I was not in the least like any of them. ... I hated them from the first, and shut myself away from them in shy, wounded and exorbitant pride. (*Notes from Underground*, 67-68)

Philip therefore has a double model: one in his creator and the other in the underground man. To minimize tediousness, only a few striking instances of the similarity between the two protagonists will be cited.

Maugham traces the genesis of *Of Human Bondage* to the "autobiographical novel" he first wrote at the age of twenty-three in 1898, and “called it rather grandly *The Artistic Temperament of Stephen Carey*” (*A Traveller in Romance*, 132). He considers in retrospect his failure to get any publishers for this manuscript a piece of good luck as it preserves his theme for a more mature treatment later. Another happy chance transforms him from a struggling novelist into one of the most sought-after dramatists of the day. His new financial freedom conduces to his authentic self-expression, and encourages him to strike out on his own. There is substantial reason for treating the difference between “The Artistic Temperament” and *OHB* as that between a diffident novice’s apprentice piece and a confident veteran’s vintage work. Feeling that “Stephen Carey” is “a little strong”, Maugham revises to tone it down. He writes of the revised version that “finally I have erased all that might bring a blush to the cheek of the modest journalist” (Maugham’s letter cited in Hastings, 70). On the other hand, he confesses, on the completion of *OHB*, that “I am aware that in the past I have compromised too much with what others have thought the public taste ... Many writers are forced by poverty to consider whether this or that will hurt the sale of their books ... but I think it would be disgraceful if I allowed any

such thought to influence me” (Maugham’s letter quoted in Hastings 166). The author of *OHB* has in addition the stimulating experience of enjoying prosperity without tranquillity. For all his fame and fortune, his harrowing, obsessive past keeps on disrupting the even tenor of his life. Driven to exorcise it by writing it out, he works from the autumn of 1911 to the autumn of 1914 to produce his first acknowledged masterpiece. So close is the novel to his life that the mother’s death scene with which it opens is almost a direct transcript of the real-life event. He breaks down while reading this chapter for a record “because it recalled a pain that the passage of more than sixty years has not dispelled” (*A Traveller in Romance*, 132). The book's raw material, its creative imperative, its perfectly realized people and places and, above all, its absolutely unadorned style all contribute to its "candour and human warmth" (200) that Cowley singles out for special praise. However personal in its inspiration, the novel has a universal theme in its image of man as a trinity of private, social and cosmic beings. In more concrete terms "the theme of the novel concerns Philip's quest for a philosophy of life, a meaning to life, a freedom from human bondage, or a bondage to passion" (Burt, 35).

With his dramatist's precision and economy and his novelist's realism and restraint, Maugham conjures up in the opening pages of *Of Human Bondage* the spectre of death. Mrs. Carey's presentiment of her imminent death brings to the fore her complex love for her nine-year-old, fatherless, club-footed son: "[S]he had loved him so passionately, because he was weakly and deformed, and because he was her child" (*OHB*, 21). Her death would deprive Philip of "the only love in the world that is quite unselfish" (*OHB*, 5). She wants to leave him as a memento the photograph of her disease-ravaged state so that he could not forget her entirely. Her fear of death and annihilation is as universal as her craving for remembrance. The orphan Philip’s first mother substitute is the childless Aunt Louisa. With the pent-up maternal instinct of a sterile woman, she loves "the friendless, cripple boy" in the expectation that "he should love her" (*OHB*, 40). Though she loves him as if he were her son, she wishes him ill so that she can nurse him day and night. With her life's savings, she helps Philip to realize his dream of becoming an art student in Paris. When she bids him farewell, she has a premonition of her coming death. So she pours out what proves to be her last wish to him: "And perhaps some day when you're a great artist you won't forget me, but you'll remember that I gave you your start" (*OHB*, 261). Both the women thus voice a universal yearning for surviving death.

Maugham further modulates human response to death. Cronshaw is a clear-sighted, quick-witted naturalist. He dismisses art "as a luxury" and Christian ethic and eschatology as moonshine. Like Spinoza, he holds that death is so unimportant that "[t]he fear of it should never influence a single action of the wise man". In his heart, however, he knows that "I shall be horribly afraid" (*OHB*, 622) at the moment of death. He further contradicts his professed philosophy. Before he dies, he wants to leave behind a published book, "and at the back of his mind was the feeling that he had produced great poetry" (*OHB*, 624). More revealing is the case of Philip's Vicar uncle Mr Carey, who like Cronshaw betrays the conflict between his intellect and his instinct. The Vicar's instinctive love of life aggravates his equally instinctive fear of death. At the hour of death, he turns "instinctively to a human being," and clings to Philip's hand "for comfort in his extremity". After he takes the Communion, Philip is astonished to see that his dying uncle "looked happy and serene" (*OHB*, 852-853). If an unbelieving philosopher and a believing priest cannot altogether withstand the fear of death, what wonder then that a prostitute like Mildred with no mental resources of her own would cravenly yield to it. When he visits the syphilitic Mildred in response to her appeal, Philip "felt the terror of her soul, and it was strangely like that terror he had seen in his uncle's eyes when he feared that he might die". Now that death stares her in the face, she no longer finds Philip a turn-off. In a manner reminiscent of his uncle's in an identical situation, she just begs his company: "I'm so afraid, don't leave me alone yet. Phil, please" (*OHB*, 834-835). As the response to death, so the means of circumventing it vary a good deal. Philip's mother "can only leave behind new life to fill the vacancy" caused by her death and thus satisfy her "passion for immortality"; Cronshaw's poetry is his "immortal progeny" with a wishful "claim upon the admiration of posterity" (*The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, 560-561). Maugham's treatment of the theme of death is only one of the many markers of the novel's universal dimension.

Initial incredulity to a shocking event like death is a natural human response. The recently orphaned Philip, however, pushes this normal tendency to the extreme. Made nostalgic by the things smelling of his mother, he has total recall of one of his sweet memories. In consequence, "he seemed to feel her kiss on his lips". He then indulges in the wishful thinking that he would continue to see her again. For the contrary is "impossible" (*OHB*, 13). With the passage of time, Philip further refines his technique for transposing reality and memory. On

moving from his uncle's vicarage to a boarding school, he moves from an ambience marked by harshness and inhibition to one permeated by sadism. His deformity prompts his peers and even some of his teachers to humiliate and torture him. The stunned cripple falls back on his tried antidote. His memory of sleeping with his mother for the last time has acquired for him all the potency of a charm against all evil. To escape his present distress, he revives this treasured image so vividly as "to feel the warmth of his mother's body against his and her arms around him" (*OHB*, 59). Philip's stratagem works because "[a] man is affected by the image of a past or future thing with the same emotion of pleasure or pain as he is by the image of a present thing" (Spinoza 178). This childhood proclivity persists right into Philip's youth. At the nadir of his misfortune, he takes to sleeping rough. Then he remembers how during his first term at school he had often thought his life was a dream from which he would awake to find himself once more at home (*OHB*, 756). This replacement of reality by make-believe enables him to hold his spirit aloft under crushing circumstances: "It was because he could not bring himself to believe in the reality of his experience that he did not give way to utter despair" (*OHB*, 762).

Philip's penchant for unrealizing bitter actuality is matched by a similar penchant for realizing pure fiction. Though "he had an instinctive disinclination to letting other people see his tears" (*OHB*, 38), he cries profusely when his friend Luard accidentally breaks his pen-holder. After the shocked friend apologizes, he acts the disconsolate son, and tells him the blatant lie that the broken pen-holder is his dead mother's last gift to him. The two questions that exercise him most are "what had made him invent that pathetic story", and "why he should have been so genuinely affected by the story he was making up" (*OHB*, 66, 67). The answer to the first question is that, in return for his peers' torture and humiliation, he himself wants to subject someone to the same in order to regain his lost self-respect. Explaining his seemingly gratuitous action to his innocent victim, the underground man says that "I had been humiliated, so I wanted to humiliate somebody else". He further adds that "I wanted to get your tears, your humiliation" (*Notes*, 115-116), by way of proving his power. Significantly Philip too relates his present play-acting to the incident of his leave-taking of his godmother, an incident in which he exploits others to savour his self-importance and his power. As for the answer to Philip's second question, Collingwood suggests that "[t]o form an idea of a feeling is already to feel it in imagination" (224). Vendler's more commonsense explanation is that "vivid imaginings are able

to produce the same psychological or even physiological reactions as their real counterparts” (54). Anyway the point to note is that Philip’s actions follow a dialectical pattern. What is more, they straddle the two planes of the material reality of perception, and the spiritual reality of memory and imagination.

Philip’s ubiquitous polarity justifies Maugham’s systematic use of dialectic to work out his theme. In fact antinomy inheres in Maugham’s image of man as such. The protagonist of *The Hero* observes that “[t]he last thing I expect is consistency in an animal of such contrary instincts as man” (244). On the basis of his self-knowledge, Philip too generalizes that “men were puppets in the hands of an unknown force, which drove them to do this and that” (*OHB*, 751). Even Spinoza locates polarity in “the nature of men” which is “so constituted that they pity those who fare badly and envy those who fare well”. More significant is his addition that “from the same property of human nature from which it follows that men feel pity, it follows also that they are envious and ambitious” (189).

Philip’s leave-taking of his god-mother is a piece of play-acting that reveals for the first time his opposing instincts. His nurse Emma suggests that he take leave of his godmother with whom he has been staying during his mother’s death and funeral. “Instinctively anxious to hide his tears”, he at first refuses, and then agrees as the desire for sympathy overcomes the desire for dignity. The self-conscious boy figures out that “if he went in they would be sorry for him”. Determined “to make the most of his opportunity”, he has Emma announce him to the ladies. They cry over his misfortune and console him. Even “though crying, he keenly enjoyed the sensation he was causing”. The ladies’ love and pity make him feel important; their tears testify to his power over them. His desire to continue the situation “a little longer to be made much of” conflicts with his perception that his sympathizers “expected him to go”. So acting his way out of a delicate situation, “he said that Emma was waiting for him” (*OHB*, 6) Thus the boy Philip comes across in his first important action as a self-divided role-player.

Philip unwittingly spoils his uncle’s Sunday siesta for which the Vicar chastises him severely. He gratuitously refers to the orphan’s dead mother, and thus adds hurt to his humiliation. The boy sulks, but refuses to apologize. Behind the façade of calmness, he actually hides his sensitiveness. Averse to crying and betraying his feelings in public, he sits alone in the dining-room, and gives himself over to unrestrained crying for his failure to memorize the

assigned collect. Similarly when his aunt tries to soothe the rebuked boy, he takes his resentment out on her: “I hate you. I wish you was dead”. Contrite at the sight of her tears, he himself begins to weep. He makes amends for his outburst by kissing her on his own for the first time. After this, their relations take on a new turn: “She loved him now with a new love because he had made her suffer” (*OHB*, 40)).

A sign of Philip’s dawning self-knowledge is his occasional glimpse of his burgeoning duality. His personality at times “gave him odd surprises; he did things, he knew not why, and afterwards when he thought of them found himself all at sea” (*OHB*, 65). His incipient sado-masochism comes to a head in his tortuous relationship with his intimate friend Rose. Friendship with Rose, a universal favourite, fills him with “proud joy”, but at the same time makes him jealous and possessive. At the failure to monopolize his company, his pique is wounded so much that “he hated Rose now, he wanted to hurt him” (*OHB*, 104, 109). In order to slight Rose, he affects “a violent friendship with a boy called Sharp whom he hated and despised” (*OHB*, 109). He has his revenge when he gets the chance to spurn Rose’s offer for a patch-up. This little drama forces him to confront his deeply fractured psyche. As when he hurt his aunt and repented, so

now that he saw he had given [Rose] pain he was very sorry. But at the moment he had not been master of himself. It seemed that some devil had seized him, forcing him to say bitter things against his will, even though at the time he wanted to shake hands with Rose and meet him more than half-way. The desire to wound had been too strong for him. He wanted to revenge himself for the pain and the humiliation he had endured. (*OHB*, 111)

Philip’s sado-masochistic polarity, as revealed here, aligns him with the underground man. The underground man confesses to having treated his friend in the same way in which Philip treats Rose:

“I did once make a friend. But I was a tyrant at heart; I wanted unlimited power over his heart and mind. ... [W]hen he became wholly devoted to me I immediately took a dislike to him and

repulsed him — just as though I had needed him only to get the upper hand of him, only for his submission. (*Notes* 69)

Gliksberg's brilliant analysis of the underground man's divided self applies to Philip as well:

The underground man dwells masochistically on his sense of inferiority, the injuries he has been made to suffer; he is a curious mixture of submissiveness and vindictiveness, humiliated impotence and assertive pride. Irrational and spiteful, he acts against his own best interests; he is a rebel who defies the categories of reason. (13)

The same wounded vanity which vitiates Philip's relations with Rose also entangles him with Mildred. Philip's deliberate manipulation of the unconscious and the others calls forth its immediate backlash.

Philip combines Mildred's instinctive evilness with Athelny's equally instinctive goodness in equal measure. This results in his persistent self-contradiction. Fed up with Mildred's habitual unscrupulousness, he orders her to accompany him to Paris or face the consequences. But the sight of the heart-broken Mildred moves him so much that he ultimately relents: "I don't want to make you unhappy. You needn't come away with me if you don't want to" (*OHB*, 564-65, 570). Similarly his close-fisted uncle's refusal to help him during his pauperage makes him pray for the old man's immediate death. But when the Vicar actually dies, Philip "could not overcome the compassion that filled his heart" (*OHB*, 796, 852). Philip has the same ambivalence towards total strangers. The Parisian pleasure-seekers, for example, excite at once both his contempt and his pity (*OHB*, 363). Likewise "human beings'" vulgarity "filled him with disgust"; their mortality with "compassion" *OHB*, 805-806).

Philip's polarity takes on many forms. His deformity withdraws him from all outdoor games. The consequent isolation "acquired for him an insignificance for which he was grateful" (*OHB*, 93). Given to relishing solitude, he finds company hateful (*OHB*, 95). Such, however, is his contrariety that he pines for both company and "popularity" for which he has no talent whatsoever (*OHB*, 102, 408). During his stay in Paris, he embraces Cronshaw's individualism.

For all that, he “felt lonely in the world and strangely home-sick. He wanted company” (*OHB*, 359).

As his introversion and extroversion, so Philip’s pride and humility bring out the polarity between his self-assertive and his self-transcending tendencies. As a lonely and studious schoolboy, Philip “had read all sorts of strange books beyond his years”. So he is not only “vain of the wider knowledge he had acquired”, but also is contemptuous of “his companions’ stupidity” (*OHB*, 89, 101). In the presence of the more knowledgeable Hayward, the adolescent Philip, however, “felt himself very ignorant and very humble” (*OHB*, 157). That is not all. The habitually conceited Philip is also wont to take “himself at the estimate” of others and to despise his once-valued “acquirements” (*OHB*, 241). Anyway his capacity for detached self-observation holds out the promise of his eventual redemption. His failure in the medical examination forces him to revise his self-image: “He had always been proud of his intelligence, and now he asked himself desperately whether he was not mistaken in the opinion he held of himself” (*OHB*, 440). At the novel’s end, Philip dies to his empirical ego, realizes his transcendental self, and thereby resolves all his dualities.

A widely shared assumption is that the equivalent of Maugham’s own stammer is Philip’s club foot. The autobiographical hero also shares his creator’s habit of living in the future. It means living in the imagination, cut off from the circumambient world. A case in point is Philip’s picturing to himself a blissful domestic life with Sally even before proposing marriage to her (*OHB*, 935). Significantly the underground man generalizes that “because we have all got out of the habit of living, we are all in a greater or less degree crippled” (*Notes*, 122). Philip, however, is more than a metaphorical cripple. It is his actual deformity that bears directly on his spiritual evolution from a unique individual to a universal man. The orphan’s congenital lameness is evidently a mark of his fatality. Victim of a series of mischances, he has reason enough to feel that a “cruel fate ... had seemed to persecute him” (*OHB*, 809).

It is as a participant in the corporate life of the school that Philip realizes what a curse his handicap is. He thus begins his exploration of self and society at once. For so inveterate a self-lover as Philip, nothing can be more mortifying than his club foot, a too visible sign of “the difference between himself and others” (*OHB*, 60). His deformity shapes his entire personality. For “imperfection of organic functions tends to produce an undue prominence in consciousness

of the bodily self and, therefore, an introspective and brooding habit of mind" (McDougall, *An Introduction to Social Psychology*, 101). The narrator too thinks that Philip's lameness makes him sensitive, self-conscious, precocious: "Philip passed from the innocence of childhood to bitter consciousness of himself by the ridicule which his club foot had excited" (*OHB*, 65). The underground man more pointedly observes that "[s]uffering — after all, that is the sole cause of consciousness" (*Notes* 41). Increasingly isolated from others, Philip finds all conventional ideas and values useless. His isolate's psychology urges individualism instead: "The circumstances of his case were so peculiar that he could not apply to them the ready-made rules which acted well enough in ordinary affairs, and he was forced to think for himself" (*OHB*, 65). He also invokes his orphanhood as a factor reinforcing his uniqueness: "He had begun to realize what a great loss he had sustained in the death of his father and mother. That was one of the differences in his life which prevented him from seeing things in the same way as other people" (*OHB*, 390). The underground man is at one with Philip on this point: "If I had grown up in a family, I shouldn't have been what I am now. ... Now I grew up without a family; that's probably why I've turned out like this — unfeeling" (*Notes*, 91-92). What, however, grounds individualism in general is the reality of human isolation. Philip and Mildred have been as intimate as two human beings can be. Nevertheless he has failed totally to cross the subjective barrier between them. Frustrated, he has "rebelled against the unsurmountable wall which seemed to divide every personality from every other" (*OHB*, 717). Subsequently the novel systematically demolishes the case for individualism. Now to revert to the impact of Philip's club foot. So intense is his self-hatred on this account that he takes to projecting himself on to the physically better favoured. His vicariism or horizontal self-transcendence figures in a separate section.

As for his interpersonal relations, the others' response to Philip's game foot determines his attitudes to them. He observes over time that people invariably vent their anger at him by targeting his club foot. This fact determines "his estimate of the human race" (*OHB*, 388). His shield against all such insults is stoic indifference. His form master Gordon, to begin with, denounces him as a "club-footed blockhead", and so repels him. Conversely Perkins considers his club-foot a mark of his extraordinary strength, "a sign of God's favour". No wonder he develops for "his headmaster a dog-like adoration" (*OHB*, 96). Youth adds to Philip's anguish. He comes to believe that "no woman could ever really look upon him without distaste for his

deformity" (*OHB*, 242). His misgivings on this score are not wholly borne out by the facts. Of his assorted lovers, Miss Wilkinson and Sally never bother about his physical defect. On the contrary, the grotesque Fanny feels drawn to him especially for his deformity. Interestingly it is Philip himself who successfully uses his handicap to rouse the stonily indifferent Mildred's pity: "You don't know what it is to be a cripple" (*OHB*, 453). As Mildred's polar opposite, Norah "pitied his deformity, ... and her pity expressed itself instinctively in tenderness" (*OHB*, 485). It is the heartless Mildred who, to humiliate him most, flings at him the word "Cripple" (*OHB*, 738), packing into it all the venom she is capable of. As a desperate job-hunter, Philip feels afresh the baneful effect of his handicap. For his club foot, he could neither enlist nor get a job as a doctor's assistant.

At the end of his "long pilgrimage", a spiritually reborn Philip realizes at the age of thirty the inseparability of good and evil as complementary opposites. He therefore accepts himself in toto:

He accepted the deformity which had made life so hard for him; he knew that it had warped his character, but now he saw also that by reason of it he had acquired that power of introspection which had given him so much delight. Without it he would never have had his keen appreciation of beauty, his passion for art and literature, and his interest in the varied spectacle of life. (*OHB*, 935)

The upshot of his life experience is his new conviction that everybody is either physically or mentally ill. Accordingly he envisages "the whole world ... like a sick-house" (*OHB*, 936). As universal abnormality subsumes his individual abnormality, his boyhood notion of his uniqueness no more holds good. Hence he integrates into society as a representative man by becoming a practising doctor in a poor fishing village.

As he uses memory and imagination to transcend the present and material reality, so Philip uses imagination to transcend the self-other duality. His project to become the other is the same as Shelley's: "A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own" (233-234). A successful actor uses the background of his mind to

stow the contents of his own consciousness and the foreground to impersonate his role. Philip does precisely the same:

He would imagine that he was some boy whom he had a particular fancy for; he would throw his soul, as it were, into the other's body, talk with his voice and laugh with his laugh; he would imagine himself doing all the things the other did. It was so vivid that he seemed for a moment really to be no longer himself. (*OHB*, 102)

By the time he becomes an articled clerk in London, he has already become under Hayward's influence something of an aesthete. One of his fellow-clerks is Watson whom Philip hates as a philistine, but envies as an athlete. As in his school days, Philip "tried to throw himself into the other's skin, imagining what life would be if he were Watson" (*OHB*, 246). Evidently Philip can impersonate both his antipathy and his envy. For example, envious of Lawson's love for Ruth, he wishes he were "feeling with his heart"; he also imagines "himself in the arms of Ruth Chalice" (*OHB*, 340-341). Philip's vicariism is shown at its most acute in his empathy with Griffiths, his rival for Mildred's love. He thinks "himself in Griffith's body, and he kissed her with his lips, smiled at her with his smiling blue eyes" (*OHB*, 570). Two of the many implications of Philip's vicariism are as follows. First his deformed body, causing his aberrant mind, demonstrates the mind-body identity; his vicariism their independence. Second his horizontal self-transcendence through impersonation is a counterpoint to his sense of uniqueness. An indication of the centrality of the motif of role-playing to the thematic design is that it runs through the entire novel.

It is Mildred's snobbism that motivates her play-acting. Snobbism is, as Jules de Gaultier defines it, "all the means used by a person to prevent the appearance of his true self in the field of his consciousness, in order to project continuously into it a finer character in which he recognizes himself" (quoted in Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 35-36). Understandable is Mildred's desire to cut a figure in her humble adorer Philip's eyes. But quite gratuitous is her invention that "my husband's an officer in India and I've come to London for my baby" (*OHB*, 514). On top of this, her "sense of propriety" induces her to present Philip to her new landlady

"as her brother". With every house she changes, she changes her identity as well. Moving into a new establishment for her delivery, she introduces herself "as the wife of a soldier who had gone to India to join his regiment" and Philip "as her brother-in-law" (*OHB*, 537). The fact that the material circumstances have nothing to do with her compulsive fibbing becomes evident from the narrator's remark: "She got pleasure out of the stories she invented, and showed a certain fertility of invention in the working out of the details" (*OHB*, 539). A prostitute's need for a cover may excuse her lying to her landlady that "I was on the stage" (*OHB*, 683). But she has no such compulsion when she lives as Philip's housekeeper and tells his "forbidding landlady" a highly romantic story of her marriage with him. Philip rightly calls her "a past-mistress of the cock-and-bull story". When she and Philip spend a few days at Brighton, he refuses to share the same room with her. She still spreads a highly glamorous story of their marriage (*OHB*, 713), and "[s]he wore a wedding-ring and called herself Mrs. Carey" (*OHB*, 725).

Almost all the major characters engage in play-acting or role-playing for some reason or other. In reality a clergyman's daughter and a governess at that, Miss Wilkinson tells Philip that it is her cherished dream "to be taken for an abandoned hussy" (*OHB*, 195). This middle-aged spinster sells a flattering self-image to the ingenuous youth: "She hinted at the luxury of her home and compared her life in Lincolnshire, with horses to ride and carriages to drive in, with the mean dependence of her present state" (*OHB*, 196). Aunt Louisa, however, tells Philip that the Wilkinsons "had never had anything more than a pony and dog-cart" (*OHB*, 197). And all that Miss Wilkinson says about her frustrated expectations is a tall story. That even a man like Athelny is not immune to vanity shows how universal it is. Very proud of his county family, Athelny shows Philip photographs of an Elizabethan mansion, where the Athelnys have lived for seven centuries, and also the family tree. Philip, however, thinks that "the whole story was an elaborate imposture, not told with any base motive, but merely from a wish to impress, startle and amaze" (*OHB*, 663). Whereas Miss Wilkinson becomes her role, Athelny rehearses it. Athelny "rehearsed all the afternoon how he should play the heavy father" before Sally's admirer. In order to dress his part, he "routed out an Egyptian tarboosh". He, however, greets the visitor with "the proud courtesy of a Spanish grandee" (*OHB*, 884). There is no limit to his eccentricity. As the fancy takes him, he now plays a "brigand", now a "fine gentleman" (*OHB*, 910, 913).

The significance of role-playing or play-acting in a mystical novel needs to be spelt out. The problems of one and many, self and other, appearance and reality occupy centre stage in such a novel. Acting touches on all these problems. In his reflections on the actor, Camus shows how role-playing subverts the antinomy between one and many, appearance and reality:

Always concerned with better representing, he [the actor] demonstrates to what a degree appearing creates being. For that is his art — to simulate absolutely, to project himself as deeply as possible into lives that are not his own. At the end of his effort his vocation becomes clear: to apply himself whole-heartedly to being nothing or to being several. (*The Myth of Sisyphus*, 75)

More to the point is Maugham's own position on the issue under discussion. Of the actors, Maugham holds that "they are all the persons they can mirror", and that "make-believe is their reality" (*The Summing Up*, 65). What is more, he suggests a parallelism between living in the phenomenal world and acting on the stage: "[s]ince we live in a world that is merely an appearance of a reality for ever unknown to us, there is not much to choose between acting our parts on the stage of a theatre and acting them on the stage of what we absurdly call real life" (*Points of View*, 34).

Imagination has its uses as well as its abuses. Philip finds others' imagination as good a trigger for escapism as his own. As a little boy, he gets into "the habit of reading", and "thus he was providing himself with a refuge from all the distress of life" (*OHB*, 46). After Mildred's first betrayal, he discovers that art "might liberate the soul from pain" (*OHB*, 472). Literature, however, mediates his desire, and blinkers his vision. Above all, it creates for him "an unreal world which would make the real world of every day a source of bitter disappointment" (*OHB*, 46). His imagination and the books he has read have generated between them his desire for the Byronic attitude (*OHB*, 135). He pictures himself as a gallant smitten with love at first sight and his sweetheart as a ravishing beauty ((*OHB*, 423-424). As for his positive use of imagination, he anticipates Mildred's desertion, and so suffers in imagination. When the reality catches up with him, "he felt merely exhausted" (*OHB*, 467). With the same apathy, he responds to the realization of his ecstatic dream of leaving shop-walking and resuming his medical studies on coming into his uncle's money. Maugham holds that a healthy man's "imagination gives him

sway over time and space” (*A Writer’s Notebook*, 124). Philip and Athelny show this transcendent power of imagination in action. The Athenian tombstones of the fourth and fifth centuries before Christ, preserved in the British Museum, impress upon Philip the fact of man’s inescapable mortality. He overflows with “compassion” for suffering mankind. “Sympathy” can so completely demolish the subjective wall that “the distinction between I and not-I vanishes” (Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena* II, 240). As Philip becomes in imagination a contemporary of the ancient Greeks, so Athelny becomes for all practical purposes a Spaniard of the Spanish Golden Age. Their flights of fancy, however, do not slacken their grip on reality. Unlike them, Cronshaw, however, comes to a pathetic end for ignoring altogether the reality of life: “What do the circumstances of life matter if your dreams make you lord paramount of time and space” (*OHB*, 627)?

Philip’s claim about his uniqueness is partially negated by his persistent impressionability. As a matter of fact, he acts mostly on others’ suggestions, and so against his grain. Experience disabuses him, and discovers his authentic self. This recurrent pattern of illusion and disillusion begins with his boyhood faith. His Vicar uncle plants in his young mind the image of God as punisher and rewarder. God’s failure to cure his lameness would have totally wrecked his piety but for his conviction that “no one ever has faith enough” (*OHB*, 74). Under Perkins’s “overwhelming influence”, his temporarily lapsed faith revives to burn itself out again. Exposed in Heidelberg to conflicting ideas about religion through Hayward and Weeks, through his own reading and through his acquaintance with the religious practices of the Protestants and Catholics, he outgrows his belief: “Faith had been forced upon him from the outside. It was a matter of environment and example. A new environment and a new example gave him the opportunity to find himself” (*OHB*, 171).

It is Sharp’s example (*OHB*, 110, 118) that inspires Philip’s decision to quit school, to migrate to Heidelberg, and then to settle in London. What with his exposure to German cosmopolitanism and the stimulating company of his maverick teachers, he enters upon his intellectual life in Germany: “It was like a window on life that he had a chance of peeping through, and he looked with a wildly beating heart” (*OHB*, 137). Anyway during his stay in Germany, he studiously prepares himself for starting life in London: “I want to get to London so that I can really begin. I want to have experiences” (*OHB*, 176). During his brief stint as an

articled clerk in London, he is thoroughly bored by his uninteresting work, and is pained by his lonely life in a strange, big city. In the absence of anything exciting or engrossing, he gets totally disenchanted with London very soon: “He had expected wonderful things from London and it had given him nothing. He hated it now” (*OHB*, 249). Such is his resilience that he now pins all his hopes on Paris and on a new career as an art student.

Philip’s interest in art is more induced than instinctive. His aunt gives him a paintbox as a Christmas gift, and encourages him up to paint. Hayward urges him to go to Paris and study art (*OHB*, 250). Others also exhort him to do the same: “They all thought he had talent; at Heidelberg they had admired his water colours, Miss Wilkinson had told him over and over again that they were charming; even strangers like the Watsons had been struck by his sketches” (*OHB*, 251). His socially constructed empirical ego is “convinced that he had in him the makings of a great painter” (*OHB*, 254). On arrival in Paris, he gets intoxicated by his peers’ conceit. He simply echoes them when he boasts that “I shall be a great artist” and that “I’ve got genius” (*OHB*, 289).

Brought down to earth by the illusion-shattering examples of Fanny and Miguel, Philip admits that he has merely acquired manual dexterity “to copy objects with accuracy”. The jealous Fanny, the dispassionate Foinet, the self-possessed Clutton, who dubs Philip “the sedulous ape”, all endorse his self-assessment. On top of this, he is struck by the fact that his artist friends invariably respond to art emotionally, instinctively whereas he himself does it intellectually. This naturally leads him to think that “if he had in him the artistic temperament...he would feel beauty in the emotional, unreasoning way in which they did” (*OHB*, 364). Clutton goes a step further, and pictures the artist as a possessed being: “The only reason that one paints is that one can’t help it” (*OHB*, 367). That all the lovers use this very expression to underline their utter helplessness once in the grip of the same sexual instinct justifies Philip’s presentation of the artist as the lover’s spiritual double, as another medium of the collective unconscious, the absolute. A monomaniac that he is, the inspired artist, on Philip’s view, ends up as a life-renouncer:

It seemed to Philip...that in the true painters, writers, musicians  
there was a power which drove them to such complete absorption  
in their work as to make it inevitable for them to subordinate life to

art. Succumbing to an influence they never realized, they were merely dupes of the instinct that possessed them, and life slipped through their fingers unlive. (*OHB*, 374)

Philip's possessed state as Mildred's lover and his lukewarmness as believer and art student evidence that whatever is not grounded on the instinct must be unreal. Fanny, for example, has Clutton's monumental self-confidence, his adamant will, his absolute insouciance but neither his creative instinct nor Cronshaw's self-knowledge. She and Miguel show the futility of will without self-knowledge, Cronshaw self-knowledge without will. Philip's renunciation of art for life, based in part on others' advice and in part on his own self-knowledge, is the first instance of his self-acceptance.

Miss Wilkinson, Norah and Mildred have for Philip different kinds of love, and bring out different facets of his personality. His relationship Miss Wilkinson shows in operation the positive aspect of the self-other dialectic as his relationship with Mildred the negative. The scheming spinster works on his vanity to overcome his dislike of strangers, and to foist on him both her own self-image and her image of him. Flattered at her supposition that he must have been "a sad dog" in Heidelberg, he feels that "Miss Wilkinson evidently expected him to behave differently" (*OHB*, 199) after she remarks that the French alone knew how to appreciate feminine charm and beauty. Her story of the French art student who fell for her in a big way produces the desired effect. What with her open enticement and his enraptured reading of *La Vie de Boheme*, he begins to care a lot for her image of him. Lest she thinks him a "milksop", he decides to make love to her. But neither the story of her previous lovers nor the example of Cacilie and Sung generates in him the sweeping passion of his dream. It is only when he conceives his intrigue with the governess as a means of gratifying his pride that he feels somewhat enthused. Though dismayed at the gulf between his idea and his experience of love, "he thrilled with the legitimate pride he would enjoy in his conquest. He owed it to himself to seduce her". Unsurprisingly when he funks the resolution to kiss her, "he was furious with himself" (*OHB*, 210, 211). What is at stake is his self-redemption. That is why when he ultimately succeeds in kissing her, "Philip was very proud of himself" (*OHB*, 214). The aplomb with which he plays the romantic lover "looked very well in his own eyes" (*OHB*, 216). As in his school days, he is as much taken in by his astute play-acting as his victim: "It was the most thrilling game he had ever played; and the

wonderful thing was that he felt almost all he said" (*OHB*, 217). Nevertheless it is the fear of going down in Miss Wilkinson's eyes and in his own that urges him on to execute the planned seduction after which "[h]e was delighted with himself" (*OHB*, 222). On the contrary, his lover's age and plainness, her wrinkles and showy dress excite his self-disgust. Complete, however, is at the end the duo's transformation into a masochistic lover and a sadistic beloved: "Her tears vaguely flattered him, and he kissed her with real passion" (*OHB*, 226). Philip's affair with Miss Wilkinson demonstrates among other things how man "gets his idea of his self in large part by accepting the ideas of himself that he finds expressed by those about him" (McDougall, *An Introduction*, 160). The self thus induced by the others is the mutable empirical ego, which contrasts with the immutable collective unconscious another name for which is the transcendental self or the absolute.

Philip's affair with Mildred literally inverts his affair with Miss Wilkinson. It is Philip's friend Dunsford who is at the beginning taken up with Mildred, an anaemic waitress, and then "Philip did not find anything attractive in her" (*OHB*, 408). Again at Dunsford's instance, Philip tries to cultivate her as his proxy. First she rebuffs his overtures; then she bristles at his gibe at her German admirer. When, however, she counters his pleasantry with downright insolence, he becomes furious and vindictive: "He could not suppress a desire to be even with her" (*OHB*, 411). A coquette that she is, she first injures his vanity by studied indifference and then tickles it by a show of interest: "Philip was elated; she had addressed him of her own accord". He has just to bide his time "to express the immensity of his contempt" (*OHB*, 414). She, however, pre-empted him by rousing his jealousy through a casual reference to his good-looking friend. Jealousy so totally replaces his contemplated revenge that "[h]e had no ill-feeling towards her now" (*OHB*, 416). His actual rival, however, is Miller, who, whenever present, monopolizes all Mildred's attentions. His intensified jealousy pushes him into the abyss of love: "He was in love with her" (*OHB*, 423). Miss Wilkinson gratifies his vanity, and induces his passion to satisfy it. Conversely Mildred wounds his vanity, and whips up his passion to savour her power over him. His polarity is manifest in his loving her with one part of his being and hating her with the other. As he realizes in retrospect, "[e]xcept for his ridiculous vanity he would never have troubled with the ill-mannered slut" (*OHB*, 437). Philip's retrospective self-knowledge substantiates Schopenhauer's observation that "only *a posteriori* through experience do we come to know ourselves as we come to know others" (*The World as Will I*, 302). That is why self and other are

so analogous.

Eventually Philip takes on the role of a masochistic lover, Mildred of a sadistic beloved. She crows over his enslavement to her: "They all laugh at you, you know. They say you're spoony on me" (*OHB*, 428). She plans a jaunt with him and then dismisses him for Miller. For a self-lover like Philip, to be cut out by a rival is the ultimate in humiliation. He can retrieve some of his lost pride and prestige if only he can force the haughty Mildred to her knees. He thus comes very close to sharing the underground man's idea of love. The latter holds that "the whole of love consists in the right, freely given to the lover, to tyrannize over the beloved. ... I did not picture love otherwise than as a struggle, always beginning with hatred, and ending with moral subjugation..." (*Notes*, 119). Anyway Philip's deliberate attempt to cut a supercilious waitress down to size ultimately boomerangs. The more he is humiliated, the more vindictive and frenzied he becomes. In the process, he gets more and more caught up in the coil of his unconscious. Hence his feeling that "he had been seized by some strange force that moved him against his will, contrary to his interests; and because he had a passion for freedom he hated the chains which bound him" (*OHB*, 437). The autonomous collective unconscious, though immanent in the psyche, appears external to the conscious self. Anyway Miss Wilkinson feeds Philip's self-love; Mildred forces his self-discovery.

True to the rhythmic oscillation of his psyche, Philip now swings from his sadistic to his masochistic pole. His failure in love is compounded by his failure in the examination, which even a duffer like Dunsford passes. Naturally he becomes sceptical about the truth of his self-image: "He had always been proud of his intelligence, and now he asked himself desperately whether he was not mistaken in the opinion he held of himself" (*OHB*, 440). He seeks out his classmates at the moment of his disgrace. In opposition to his old maxim of following "his inclinations with due regard for the policeman round the corner", he now takes "a grim pleasure in self-torture" (*OHB*, 440). No wonder he puts his pride in his pocket, and pops up to Mildred's amusement. The sadist waitress first reminds him of his brave words that he would never see her again, and then forces his apology for spying on her. He on his part lays bare his heart, and puts himself at her mercy. He rightly thinks that "she did not care for him", but not that "she was cold". (*OHB*, 449-450). As a desperate expedient, he puts in a superb performance as a slighted, heart-broken cripple: "You don't know what it is to be a cripple". As a masochist role-player, he

is a natural: "He was beginning to act now, and his voice was husky and low". Whereas his pestering fails, his play-acting succeeds: "She took his hand and looked at him, and her own eyes were filled with tears" (*OHB*, 453, 454). For all that, she finally elopes with Miller, and so forestalls her "complete surrender" to Philip. All his humiliation and suffering on her account yield him invaluable self-knowledge: "He told himself that deep down in his heart was mortified pride, his passion had begun in wounded vanity, and it was this at bottom which caused now great part of his own wretchedness" (*OHB*, 470). Each of the three phases of Philip's relationship with Mildred has its distinguishing mark. During the first phase, Philip burns in the main with lust for her. So he repeatedly declares that "[h]e wanted her", and that "he must have her whatever happened" (*OHB*, 425, 461). His vindictiveness and his sexual desire intermingle so much that he even toys with the idea of marrying her as a means of avenging himself (*OHB*, 461).

Philip's affair with Norah and his friendship with Griffiths interlude between the first and the second phase of his relations with Mildred. After his harrowing love experience with her, he needs a breather to regain his lost "self-esteem". Norah is more of a contrast than a parallel to Mildred. She separates from her husband, mothers her child, hacks to eke out a living. Mildred, seduced, impregnated, deserted by Miller, comes to sponge on Philip along with her baby. With her self-knowledge and self-acceptance, her unconcern and "impudent defiance of fate", her gaiety and goodness and above all a private faith of her own, Norah foreshadows Athelny and Sally in many respects. It is only natural that she should take Philip under her wing and charm his anguish. His handicap and his heartbreak appeal to her "maternal instinct". "She had loved him", with hindsight Philip himself realizes, "with a love that was ... almost maternal" (*OHB*, 593). A measure of the disinterestedness of her love that makes him feel "so proud and so happy and so grateful" is that she loves him "because he was he". For all that he owes her, "Philip did not love her at all" (*OHB*, 485). This is because "the important thing was to love rather than to be loved" (*OHB*, 518). Philip is the passive recipient of Norah's love; he is the active lover of Mildred. And what is important is "to love rather than to be loved" (*OHB*, 518). Both equally selfish, Philip and Mildred use each other during the first phase as a means of satisfying their passion for domination and possession. The selfless Norah serves and adores Philip for no ulterior end. In contrast to the duo's eros is her agape.

Mildred and Philip of the second phase are the very reverse of what they were in the first until Griffith's appearance on the scene as Philip's new rival. As an abandoned mistress, and a pregnant one at that, it is Mildred who seeks Philip out. She stands before him with "a dreadful humility in her bearing" (*OHB*, 504), and cries her heart out. As a humble Mildred replaces the haughty one, so a kind-hearted Philip replaces the vindictive one. He is "so deeply moved by her distress that he could not think of himself" (*OHB*, 507). After evoking his pity, she warms into his heart further by harping on Miller's meanness and on his goodness. That her regret at refusing to marry him "seemed to swell his heart" (*OHB*, 505) signals her success in stirring up his vanity. Once he confesses to his unabated love, she slips into the role of a contrite beloved: "She put up her lips and he kissed her. There was a surrender in the action which he had never seen in her before" (*OHB*, 508). However flattered at her present show of love, he, however, feels "dreadfully humiliated" at her spurning him for Miller for whom she was willing to risk everything. In part to soothe his hurt pride, in part to recompense his benevolence, she now offers Philip her favours openly: "Philip, if you want me still I'll do anything you like now" (*OHB*, 510). One of the two conditions for Philip's total freedom from her — "complete surrender on her part" (*OHB*, 459) — is fulfilled. But the other — the satisfaction of his desire for her — remains unfulfilled as he rejects her offer on the grounds of his fastidiousness: "I've been sick with love for you ever since I saw you, but now — that man. I've unfortunately got a vivid imagination. The thought of it simply disgusts me" (*OHB*, 511). Here Philip is acting like a betrayed lover as imagined by Spinoza: "For a man who imagines that the woman he loves is prostituting herself to another will not only feel pain from the fact that his own appetite is hindered; he will be averse to her because he is compelled to link the image of the thing that he loves with the genitals and excrement of another" (191). Philip's refusal to have sex with Mildred has two important consequences. First his unconsummated love retains its old intensity intact. Second it soars from the physical to the spiritual plane as he wants no more to possess her body but to conquer her personality. Last of all, the fact that his spiritual love continues to be as fierce as his physical connotes the mind-body identity. It thus indirectly prepares for the identity between El Greco's mysticism of the soul and Philip's mysticism of the body.

Philip's vanity makes him feel that self-sacrifice is the surest means of scoring over his miserly rival Miller and of winning Mildred's love. The fact that a vice like vanity can breed a virtue like self-sacrifice is not at all a paradox in Maugham's scheme of things. Thus Ashenden

generalizes that “[vanity] is part and parcel of every virtue” (*Collected Short Stories* 3, 180). Maugham himself explains the whole issue thus: "Sympathy, and, above all, love, make it even a satisfaction to sacrifice oneself for others. Then, altruism is the strange outcome of man's innate egoism" (*Points of View*, 191). Whatever the extent of Philip's self-sacrifice for her, the innately selfish Mildred takes everything as a matter of course. Her indifference frustrates his craving for praise, and so occasions his self-division. Accordingly “he found in himself a real satisfaction because she was happy. It was an act of self-sacrifice on his part that he did not grudge her pleasure even though paid for by his own disappointment, and it filled his heart with a comfortable glow” (*OHB*, 525). Predictably his extravagance on her account “caused him a little thrill of happiness and pride” (*OHB*, 534). Unlike Norah's disinterested self-sacrifice, his "self-sacrifice is the sacrifice of one part of the ego to another part" (Aldous Huxley, *After Many a Summer*, 96). Evidently the self-other polarity can be as intrapersonal as good and evil can be inseparable.

Whereas Philip acts to himself, Mildred continues to act up to him. When he proposes to entertain her, she plays the role her sense of propriety dictates:

She wanted some persuasion, for she had an idea of acting up to her situation, and felt instinctively that it did not accord with her distressed condition to go to a place of entertainment. At last Philip asked her to go simply to please him, and when she could look upon it as an act of self-sacrifice she accepted. (*OHB*, 511)

In the excitement of the music-hall, “she forgot that she ought to preserve a dolorous countenance” (*OHB*, 512), and gives her authentic self away. When Philip angers her, she is too agitated to play-act. She cannot help betraying her inmost self: “I never liked you, not from the beginning, but you forced yourself on me, I always hated it when you kissed me. I wouldn't let you touch me now not if I was starving” (*OHB*, 565). Evidently emotion is as inimical to play-acting as composure is indispensable to it. On this evidence, the conscious self is the locus of pretence, the collective unconscious of essence.

It is the charming, womanizing Griffiths who jolts Philip and Mildred out of the world of appearance into the world of reality. Philip has talked about each to the other with so much enthusiasm that Mildred and Griffiths already feel drawn towards each other even before

meeting. When they actually meet, they fall in love at first sight, and begin to flirt under Philip's very nose. He has to admit his own responsibility for the imbroglio. He should have known "what would happen when he introduced Griffiths to Mildred; his own passion was enough to arouse the other's desire" (*OHB*, 580). He forces Mildred to choose between a romp to Paris in his company and a romp to Oxford in Griffiths's. It is Griffiths's lack of money that forces her to accept Philip's offer. As the unflattering truth dawns on him, Philip wants to ascertain "whether the woman not only gives herself to him, but also gives up for his sake what she has or would like to have" (Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 484). So he offers to finance the couple's trip, and they go away. Thus Philip's plan to satisfy his pride backfires; Mildred disappears from his life for the second time. Failure to save his face by winning back the deserted Norah completes his discomfiture. As in the case of Mildred, so in the case of Norah too, "his vanity was more affected than his heart" (*OHB*, 599).

Made introspective by his love experience with Mildred, Philip realizes that "he was swayed by some power alien to and yet within himself". If his rational will was so ineffectual, it was because "he was powerless in the grasp of instincts, emotions" (*OHB*, 589). It is this irresistible power that compels him to sacrifice Noah to Mildred despite his full knowledge of the character of the two women and the consequences of his action. His brand of instinctivist determinism is diffused all through the novel. Mildred, for example, prefers misery with Griffiths to happiness with Philip. She justifies herself by echoing Philip back to him: "You said yourself I couldn't help it if I'm in love with" (*OHB*, 563) Griffiths. When the repentant Griffiths apologizes to Philip for running away with Mildred, he too pleads that "I simply couldn't help myself. She simply carried me off my feet and I would have done anything to get her" (*OHB*, 584). A long-time English expatriate in Paris, Cronshaw cannot imagine living anywhere else. Nevertheless at the approach of death, he confesses to Philip that he wants to die among his own people: "I don't know what hidden instinct drew me back at the last" (*OHB*, 621). Incidentally Miss Ley in *The Merry-Go-Round*, Rosie and Driffield in *Cakes and Ale* and Miss King of the eponymous short story betray the same nostalgia for their roots. Jung explains that "[t]he archetype here is the *participation mystique* of primitive man with the soil on which he dwells, and which contains the spirits of his ancestors" (*The Portable Jung* 321). An arch-snob and comfort-loving aesthete, Hayward too like Cronshaw acts out of character when he volunteers to fight for his country. Philip guesses right that "[s]ome power within him made it seem necessary

to go and fight for his country" (*OHB*, 750). All these examples support Philip's generalization about man's subservience to the collective unconscious, which is the absolute immanent in man:

It looked as though men were puppets in the hands of an unknown force, which drove them to do this and that; and sometimes they used their reason to justify their actions; and when this was impossible they did the actions in despite of reason. (*OHB*, 750-751).

This leads Calder to observe that "[t]he most common image in *Of Human Bondage* is that of the individual acting like a puppet or robot, driven by a force completely divorced from his will" (*W. Somerset Maugham*, 117). What is more, Maugham suggests rather than states that the absolute resident within man is his fate. Thus the narrator says of the pleasure-seekers in the Bal Bullier that "they danced furiously as though impelled by some strange power within them", and that "fate seemed to tower above them" (*OHB*, 362). In any case, Maugham's presentation of the sameness of human character and of man as the victim of an ineluctable power carries conviction.

Philip's submission to his successive mentors is less absolute than his surrender to his collective unconscious. It is as an adolescent that he encounters his first mentor in the aesthete Hayward in Heidelberg. As befits an aesthete, Hayward has as his motto "the Whole, the Good, and the Beautiful" (*OHB*, 162). He raves over the aesthetes' favourites such as Pater and Meredith, Arnold and Newman, Flaubert and Verlaine, Dante and Fitzgerald. His real gift lies in his capacity to empathize with a writer, to capture the best in him, and then to transmit his passion to others. He infects the neophyte with his own passion for the arts and beauty, for the naïve "Philip was completely under Hayward's influence" (*OHB*, 157). The mentor's idealism, escapism, elitism and derivativeness affect the disciple. So Hayward's companionship, thinks the narrator, is "the worst possible thing for Philip" (*OHB*, 178). Exposed to a contrary set of ideas in Paris, Philip outgrows much of Hayward's influence. Thoroughly disabused, he sees his old master for what he is: "He was weak and vain; he mingled idleness and idealism so that he could not separate them" (*OHB*, 491).

It is in recoil from Hayward's idealism that Philip converts to his second mentor the Parisian Cronshaw's naturalism (*OHB*, 672). The irony is that both the master and the disciple

show up the fallacy of the major tenets of naturalism. Cronshaw holds that “[m]en attach importance only to self-preservation and the propagation of their species” (*OHB*, 287). Fanny’s suicide for the sake of art gives the direct lie to this generalization, which applies only to the instinct-ridden natural man. The determinist Cronshaw maintains that “when an action is performed it is clear that all the forces of the universe from all eternity conspired to cause it, and nothing I could do have prevented it. It was inevitable” (*OHB*, 315). If this were the whole truth, Philip could not have given up the pursuit of art, and start life afresh. Philip’s charity towards Mildred and Cronshaw, and Athelny’s towards Philip tear to shreds Cronshaw’s belief in “the inevitable selfishness of humanity” (*OHB*, 316-317). Similarly Philip’s own belief in individualism is confuted by his dependence, during his illness, first on Weeks and then on Griffiths. Nothing condemns the whole of Cronshaw’s philosophy so much as his own pathetic end. A martyr to alcoholism, he dies a pauper because he surrenders to his instincts. His life and his death are an object lesson to Philip: “Philip’s rule of life, to follow one’s instincts with due regard to the policeman round the corner, had not acted very well there: it was because Cronshaw had done this that he had made such a lamentable failure of existence. It seemed that the instincts could not be trusted” (*OHB*, 642). This new realization on the part of Philip of the paramount importance of will and reason as a counter to the unruly instincts and emotions in developing a healthy and balanced philosophy of life puts him on the road to mysticism, at least within the value scheme of the present novel.

Mildred and Cronshaw represent instinct’s negative aspect; the Athelnys the positive. Consorting so long with a whole host of egoists, Philip discovers in the Athelnys a group of altruists who force on him a thorough reevaluation of all his values:

There was one quality which they had that he did not remember to have noticed in people before, and that was goodness. It had not occurred to him till now, but it was evidently the beauty of their goodness which attracted him. In theory he did not believe in it: if morality were no more than a matter of convenience good and evil had no meaning. He did not like to be illogical, but here was simple goodness, natural and without effort, and he thought it beautiful. (*OHB*, 717)

Thus Athelny, the last of his three mentors, forces Philip to put the incontrovertible authority of experience above the always debatable theory.

An aesthete turned mystic, “Athelny is the apotheosis of the Maugham adventurer” (Curtis, *The Pattern of Maugham*, 87). This maverick has poetry in his soul. Like El Greco, he sees the prosaic quality of his feckless, shiftless life with the eye of the imagination, and so sees it transfigured. A pocket-size Don Quixote, “he is a man who consistently lives his dreams” (Curtis, *The Pattern*, 87). With his boisterous gaiety, irrepressible spirit and exuberant imagination, he is a whole man and a mystic at that. Lying in his hospital bed, he goes on translating the poems of San Juan de La Cruz, “one of the Spanish mystics”, and he goes into ecstasy over El Greco’s paintings. “A truly free man” (Calder, *Somerset Maugham*, 112), he is above class consciousness, social snobbery, affectations of all kinds. What he has in abundance is the holiness of the heart’s affections. His own indigence notwithstanding, he does not hesitate to succor the vagabond Philip. This mercurial man, however, has his ballast in his working class, practical, motherly, unwed wife Betty.

The eccentric Athelny is a syncretist thinker. There is no contradiction between his adoration of art, beauty and spirit as there is between his own atheism and his advocacy of religion for “women and children”. His defence is that beauty demands the sacrifice of truth: “It’s asking a great deal that things should appeal to your reason as well as to your sense of the aesthetic” (*OHB*, 665). An instinctively good man, he is a living contradiction of his thesis that a man is likely to be good “if he has learned goodness through the love of God” (*OHB*, 665). Philip can bring himself to accept neither this proposition of his master nor his estimate of life as worthwhile (*OHB*, 666, 828). For he firmly believes that “life was not so horrible if it was meaningless”(OHB, 829).

Philip’s encounter with El Greco’s mystical paintings through Athelny’s agency marks a turning point in his life. What El Greco has achieved is reconciliation between Cronshaw’s realism and Hayward’s idealism, eschewing the excesses of both. He has filtered visible reality through the alembic of imagination; he has presented flesh transfigured by spirit. In the landscape of Toledo, he has painted "a city of the soul": "It was a mystical city in which the imagination faltered like one who steps out of the light into darkness; the soul walked naked to and fro, knowing the unknowable, and conscious strangely of experience, intimate but

inexpressible, of the absolute" (*OHB*, 670). As the painter of the soul, El Greco has portrayed both Spanish monks and Spanish gentlemen sacrificing the flesh to the spirit, the visible to the invisible. This accent on asceticism and other-worldliness qualifies El Greco's mysticism as the mysticism of the soul. By the time of his exposure to El Greco, Philip himself has undergone a spiritual transformation. The knowledge that "the power that possessed him seemed to have nothing to do with reason" (*OHB*, 494) no longer inclines him to act precipitately. Even though "[e]motions, ... are the ground of conduct" and "passion" a source of "a singular vigour" (*OHB*, 394, 495), there is no knowing whether they would lead to good or evil. On the other hand, Kantian rationalism, as espoused by Macalister, presumes man's absolute freedom. Wisdom lies in harmonizing all the constituents, both conscious and unconscious, of the human personality. So El Greco's paintings with their emphasis on man's spirituality accord with Philip's new scheme of life; they clarify what is vague to him. Anyway the vision of life that Philip carries with him from these pictures is one which posits the impregnable will against the imperious instincts so that life ceases to be merely chance-directed. It replaces self-indulgence by self-conquest, an exciting physical life by an equally exciting mental life:

He seemed to see that a man need not leave his life to chance, but that his will was powerful; he seemed to see that self-control might be as passionate and as active as the surrender to passion; he seemed to see that the inward life might be as manifold, as varied, as rich with experience, as the life of one who conquered realms and explored unknown lands. (*OHB*, 673)

In the economy of the psyche, the will serves as a rudder because "it is itself a form of energy and has the power to overcome another form" (Jung, *On the Nature of the Psyche*, 109).

As his old nemesis, Mildred alone can put to the test of reality Philip's new self and his new vision. A measure of his self-confidence and magnanimity is that he offers, on espying her streetwalking, to take her back on condition that she keep house for him. Seeing her for the first time for what she is, he makes allowance for her lapses and her limitations. It is a spiritually reborn Philip who feels for her, in place of his old vindictiveness, "an overwhelming compassion". Such is his new generosity that "with all his heart he forgave her the misery she had caused him" (*OHB*, 698). Something else, however, crops up to plague them. Their private

self changes radically; yet each holds, unaware of this, the other to his outgrown public self. No wonder Philip finds the unknown new Mildred "a puzzle to him"; she feels equally "puzzled by him". The unregenerate Philip sought self-fulfilment in make-believe, the frustrated Mildred seeks it in memory. To assuage her feeling of humiliation at her decline from Philip's beloved into his housemaid, she conjures up her own old image of herself as a sadist and of him as a masochist: "It gave her a thrill to think how he had cringed before her. He would have been glad to lie down on the ground for her to walk on him. She had seen him cry" (*OHB*, 730). The regenerate Philip and the degenerate Mildred simply reverse their old roles as the supplicating lover and the disdainful beloved: "She suffered from pique, and sometimes in a curious fashion she desired Philip. He was so cold now that it exasperated her" (*OHB*, 734). An incurable self-lover that she is, she is driven by his determined evasion of all her traps to declare her love openly: "I do love you, Philip". His unexpected and unflattering response that "[y]ou disgust me" (*OHB*, 736-737) shatters her vanity, and leaves her dazed. Maddened by vindictiveness, she ruins her onetime lover and her never-failing benefactor. Philip's ruination is of course a thematic necessity. Already self-critical, self-scient and self-conquered, he needs to be purged of the remaining vices such as pride, class consciousness, respectability, etc. to turn into a mystical hero.

In accord with the novel's dialectical theme, Philip's experience of death shapes his philosophy of life. Each death leaves its imprint on him, and contributes its share to the final crystallization of his life attitude. Fanny's suicide, to begin with, confronts him with the reality of death, Aunt Louisa's with his own mortality, Cronshaw's with life's futility. Coming as it does with an added shock because the deceased is his own age, Hayward's death sets Philip meditating on life in general and on his own in particular. He has also to reckon with the role of chance, symbolized by the stock exchange crash, whose victim he has been and which implies the amorality of the world. The absurdity of life and the contingency of success strike him as the two givens of the human condition:

He did not know that he had ever done anything but what seemed best to do, and what a cropper he had come; other men, with no more advantages than he, succeeded, and others again, with many more, failed. It seemed pure chance. The rain fell alike upon the

just and upon the unjust, and for nothing was there a why and a wherefore. (*OHB*, 807-808)

Besides, man's chance appearance in a random world confirms Philip's belief in life's innate meaninglessness: "There was no meaning in life, and man by living served no end. It was immaterial whether he was born or not born, whether he lived or ceased to live. Life was insignificant and death without consequence" (*OHB*, 809). Apart from the fact that all his subsequent experiences further strengthen his belief, Schweitzer too seems to share it: "If we take the world as it is, it is impossible to attribute to it a meaning in which the aims and objects of mankind and of individual men have a meaning also" (9).

Antinomy is of the very essence of Philip's final life vision. As his loss of faith in God, so his loss of faith in life's meaning adds to his spiritual freedom. Pursuit of success in a meaningless world ceases to be meaningful goal. So all distinction between success and failure disappears, and life loses its sting. Man, dislodged from the centre of the universe, shrinks to an utter insignificant. From this Philip concludes that "he was the most inconsiderable creature in that swarming mass of mankind which for a brief space occupied the surface of the earth" (*OHB*, 809). This conviction permeates the whole being of the spiritually reborn Philip. He can now calmly tell Mildred, whose esteem he once coveted, that "I'm in a shop" (*OHB*, 833). Sally's love makes him blurt out that "I'm insignificant and crippled and ordinary and ugly" (*OHB*, 927). It is worth noting that "[t]he virtue of the mystical hero is humility" (Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics*, 227). Humble on the human plane, Philip is arrogant on the cosmic. He claims to be "almighty because he had wrenched from chaos the secret of its nothingness" (*OHB*, 809). He is all for man's conquest of his irrational psyche and for total surrender to the equally irrational universe. For "the objective half of life and reality is in the hand of fate", but "the subjective half is ourself, and in essentials it already remains the same" (Schopenhauer, "The Wisdom of Life", 15-16). Finally his image of man as a medium of the absolute and therefore devoid of agency and responsibility induces his all-forgiving attitude:

At this moment he could feel a holy compassion for them all. They were the helpless instruments of blind chance. He could pardon Griffiths for his treachery and Mildred for the pain she had caused him. They could not help themselves. The only reasonable thing

was to accept the good of men and be patient with their faults. The words of the dying god crossed his memory :

*Forgive them, for they know not what they do.* (OHB, 936)

Though Christian dogma repels him, Christian ethics inspires Philip. Now the question is if everybody is a patient and so excusable, how Philip alone can be an all-forgiving agent. Powys offers a witty solution of the apparent paradox of the other's determinism and the self's freedom:

In your general attitude to mankind it is best to regard all men as absolutely bound by the fatality of their temperament, while you alone are responsible and free; but in any statement of your philosophic opinion it is imperative to confess your secret knowledge, based upon your inmost experience that there is no limit to the power of the human will. (212)

As a mystic hero, Philip can, however, plead that "only the ego is bound by destiny, and not the Self, and that the ego is nonexistent" (*Points of View*, 93). And Philip's life vision has its negative in the world's cruelty; its positive in the world's redeeming beauty: "He was overwhelmed by the beauty of the world. Beside that nothing seemed to matter" (OHB, 880).

When Cronshaw suggests the Persian carpet as a metaphor for life, Philip could make no sense of this conundrum. When, however, he himself conceives life as a work of art, he conflates life and art with gratuitousness as their common feature: "As the weaver elaborated his pattern for no end but the pleasure of his aesthetic sense, so might a man live his life, or if one was forced to believe that his actions were outside his choosing, so might a man look at his life, that it made a pattern" (OHB, 809). As the raw material for the art of life, Philip's experiences are the given and so necessary. His purged and free imagination has to look for guidance to the eternally free reason. For however intense his emotional crisis, "his reason was someone looking on, observing the facts but powerless to interfere" (OHB, 589). More importantly his reason has to know his experiences, particularly his instincts and emotions; his will has to master them, his imagination to transmute them before they can take their assigned place in a work of art. Transfer of his experiences from the existential to the aesthetic plane presumes his detachment from any of them, which is why "[h]e seemed to stand above the accidents of his existence, and

he felt that they could not affect him again as they had done before" (*OHB*, 811). He is all four in one: the raw material and the artist, the work of art and its appreciator. His death will end all.

Philip is an artist in life, Clutton an artist by vocation. Hence the dialectical relationship between them. Philip's successive mentors are Hayward, Cronshaw and Athelny, Clutton's Gauguin, Cezanne and El Greco. Philip rejects his old gods to strike out on his own; so does his spiritual double. Philip denies the world any morality, Clutton any beauty. "[B]eauty", he avers, "is put into things by painters and poets. They create beauty" (*OHB*, 473). Like Philip, he too rejects any idea of success inasmuch as he insists on art's gratuitousness as Philip does life's: "We don't attach any meaning to greatness or to smallness. What happens to our work afterwards is unimportant; we have got all we could out of it while we were doing it" (*OHB*, 368-369). Philip thinks that both Clutton and he engage in the same enterprise but use different mediums, he life and Clutton art (*OHB*, 478). To crown all is their shared enthusiasm for El Greco. While drinking in the import of El Greco's paintings, Philip speculates about the reasons for Clutton's interest in them, and locates it in El Greco's mystical vision and his technical virtuosity to handle it. Anyway he portrays Clutton, in his own likeness, as an embryonic mystic:

He was a man of unusual character, mystical after the fashion of a time that had no leaning to mysticism, who was impatient with life because he found himself unable to say the things which the obscure impulses of his heart suggested. His intellect was not fashioned to the uses of the spirit. It was not surprising that he felt a deep sympathy with the Greek who had devised a new technique to express the yearning of his soul. (*OHB*, 668-669)

Maugham has Spinoza's sanction for conceiving phenomenal nature as the absolute. Athelny's explanation of what "hopping" means to his family is actually an explanation of what nature means to man:

The sojourn in the fields gave them a new strength; it was like a magic ceremony, by which they renewed their youth and the power of their limbs and the sweetness of their spirit: Philip had heard him say many fantastic, rhetorical, and picturesque things on the subject. (*OHB*, 716)

Philip's passion for nature corroborates the truth beneath Athelny's rhapsody. His childhood at seaside Blackstable has moulded his self into what it essentially is, and continues to be despite all the ephemeral trappings of civilization. It is there that "he had first acquired the desire, which was now an obsession, for eastern lands and sunlit islands in a tropic sea" (*OHB*, 898). That explains his occasional bouts of "irresistible longing for the sea". His desire for the sea can be sometimes so intense that "[h]e felt he would go mad if he had to spend another night in London" (*OHB*, 710). Athelny's discourse on "Philip's soul and the winding tendrils of the hops" touches on a profound truth. The serene beauty of the hopfields makes Philip feel that "perhaps there was more of the Greek spirit there than you could find in the books of professors or in museums. He was thankful for the beauty of England" (913). Evidently Maugham is, as Joseph Dobrinsky thinks (52), something of a Wordsworthian.

The character who comes closest to being a human counterpart of nature is Sally. She combines complete self-control with healthy animal desire, perfect naturalness with innate goodness, childlike naivete with a mature sense of the ridiculous. She is remarkably free from either self-love or self-contempt. As unselfconscious as mother earth, nature images alone can capture her animating spirit. If she looks in the glow of the camp fire "like some rural goddess", she resembles, during hop-picking with sweat beads on her upper lip, "a rosebud bursting into flower." Naturally Philip thinks that this "rural goddess" is in her proper keeping in a rural environment:

It would be pleasant to take her away from that London in which she seemed an unusual figure, like a cornflower in a shop among orchid and azaleas; he had learned in the Kentish hop-field that she did not belong to the town; and he was sure that she would blossom under the soft skies of Dorset to a rarer beauty. (*OHB*, 938)

What further underlines her affinity with nature is her total unawareness of her exceptional beauty and her goodness. Beddow's observation on Wilhelm and Natalie in Goethe's novel applies literally to Philip and Sally: "Wilhelm has been aspiring to apprehend and to realise the Good and the Beautiful: Natalie is the Good and the Beautiful personified, to such a degree that she has no distinct perception of either her own beauty or her own goodness" (120).

At the novel's beginning Philip loses his mother; at its end "he re-discovers his mother in Maria de Sol, the full-breasted, broad-hipped goddess of the Kentish hop fields" (Curtis *The Pattern*, 88). Sally is at once Philip's mother and his lover. She becomes aware for the first time of her love for him when "you'd been sleeping out and hadn't had anything to eat" (*OHB*, 924-925). Manifestly her love originates in compassion rather than passion. So strong, however, is her attachment to the penniless, handicapped Philip that her mother fails to argue her into marrying her handsome, affluent engineer-suitor. Still she cannot bring herself to express her love for Philip though she goes on betraying it. Even before she has sex with him, she minds him, as she does her siblings, "in her grave, maternal way". He on his part finds her "maternal spirit" "amusing", "charming". The inspiration for their first ever love-making is first the sight of others already engaged in the same act. The earth itself, with the tremulous night and pregnant silence, seems to be another aphrodisiac. It reminds Philip of Jessica and Lorenzo's amorous conceits. Nature and humans, imagination and instincts all combine to sharpen his senses, to make him unprecedentedly responsive to beauty, and ultimately to metamorphose him into "pure soul". In fact, the couple's love-making is a unifying act as it is an ecstasy:

He did not know what there was in the air that made his senses so strangely alert; it seemed to him that he was pure soul to enjoy the scents and the sounds and the savours of the earth. He had never felt such an exquisite capacity for beauty. He was afraid that Sally by speaking would break the spell, but she said never a word, and he wanted to hear the sound of her voice. Its low richness was the voice of the country night itself. (*OHB*, 920)

Whereas Philip reaches the spirit through the stimulated senses, El Greco does it through the smothered senses. Therein lies the difference between one's mysticism of the flesh and the other's mysticism of the spirit. Now to return to the lovers. Either of them is at the moment placid and self-possessed rather than passionate. Philip asks her in jest to kiss him, and Sally agrees in the same spirit. It is only after their intimate physical contact that their instincts excite and overwhelm them. Far from being premeditated or passionate-possessive, their love therefore qualifies as purely spontaneous or instinctive:

She gave him her lips; they were warm and full and soft; he

lingered a little, they were like a flower; then, he knew not how, without meaning it, he flung his arms round her. She yielded quite silently. Her body was firm and strong. He felt her heart beat against his. Then he lost his head. His senses overwhelmed him like a flood of rushing waters. He drew her into the darker shadow of the hedge. (*OHB*, 920)

Significantly the graphic description of the couple's love-making builds up to the extinction of Philip's consciousness, which means that his separative empirical ego dissolves in the collective unconscious, the immanent absolute, as it normally does in ecstasy. Metaphorically speaking, Philip and Nature, symbolized by Sally, fuse into a single entity.

Philip considers his momentary surrender to his instinct an unpardonable indiscretion on his part; Sally gives it no second thought. The only perceptible change in her is that she becomes more of a mother to him: "It was as though what had happened gave her a sort of right over him, and she looked upon him as a child to be cared for" (*OHB*, 923). Philip conceives her love, just like his own, as a grand synthesis of elements natural and human, sensual and maternal:

He had a vague inkling that many things had combined, things that she felt though was unconscious of, the intoxication of the air and the hops and the night, the healthy instincts of the natural woman, a tenderness that overflowed, and an affection that had in it something maternal and something sisterly; and she gave all she had to because her heart was full of charity. (*OHB*, 926)

Sally's fear of pregnancy proves false; still Philip decides to marry her, a decision uninfluenced by any sense of obligation. It is while reaching this decision that he sees the whole of his past life until that moment in an entirely new perspective:

It seemed to him that all his life he had followed the ideals that other people, by their words or their writings, had instilled into him, and never the desires of his own heart. Always his course had been swayed by what he thought he should do and never by what he wanted with his whole soul to do. (*OHB*, 940)

This plea for a private ethic was made a decade ago by Basil in *The Merry-Go-Round*: “Let us do this and that because we want to and because we must, not because other people think we ought” (333). Anyway Philip’s decision to marry and to opt for the simplest and the most perfect pattern is his first authentic act. As Dean Doner observes: “It is not until the final incident of the novel that Philip makes a positive act of will in terms of the entire situation unaffected by prior desire or decision” (263). So to reject Philip's's marriage decision as implausible or irrelevant is to miss the whole drift of his spiritual evolution and to reject the novel’s only possible logical conclusion. Loss, for example, expects the novel to end otherwise than it does: “The reader fully expects Philip to follow the less travelled path, but then his love for Sally changes all of that, with a last-minute turnaround that is not entirely convincing” (*Of Human Bondage* 74).

To grasp the thematic coherence of a novel of the size of *Of Human Bondage*, its key points need to be identified, its thematic motifs gathered together. Philip discards one by one such traditional values as religion (*OHB*, 170-173), love (*OHB*, 669), and even art (*OHB*, 750). He also outgrows Hayward’s aestheticism and Cronshaw’s naturalism, two of the egoistic values. He finally embraces a secular variant of El Greco’s religious mysticism. The novel systematically prepares for his eventual conversion. To begin with, memory and imagination between them project man as an amphibian, moving at will between the planes of material and spiritual reality. And then the role-players persistently demolish the antinomy between appearance and reality, self and other, one and many. Time and space multiply one into many; imagination reduces many to one. Thus Philip migrates, on the wings of imagination, to ancient Greece and Athelny to the Spanish Golden Age, overcoming in the process all temporal and spatial differences. What, however, confirms man’s oneness is the collective unconscious as his common determinant and death as his common end. Murdoch, too, attributes man’s oneness to these two factors: “We are all mortal and equally at the mercy of necessity and chance. These are the true aspects in which men are all brothers” (*The Sovereignty of Good*, 72). *Of Human Bondage* thus meticulously establishes the oneness of the world and of man, which is the common core of the mysticism of all varieties. One confusion about the novel’s mystical theme needs to be removed. Archer very perceptively remarks that when Philip “comes to understand the meaning of life, it is not in the transcendent spiritual terms that El Greco suggests” (186). This is because Philip opposes his this-worldliness to El Greco’s otherworldliness, his belief in life’s innate meaninglessness to the other’s belief in life’s divine significance, and above all his

mysticism of the flesh to the other's mysticism of the spirit. For all their differences, El Greco's religious and Philip's secular mysticism are at one in celebrating selflessness and goodness. Anyway Maugham is unwavering in using his "work at bottom towards the solution of the problem of existence" (Schopenhauer *WWR* II, 406).

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